

Mark I. Payne

Director, Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health

A Lifetime of Commitment to Hope and Recovery



Mark Payne, Social Worker

Mark started out at age 18 as a psych tech, working on the geriatric unit at Utah State Hospital. He went on to become a social worker, still at USH, and eventually the Adult Administrative Director.

"Mark is a person who inspires the confidence of others. People want to follow him into battle. He leads by example. In the difficult world of mental health and substance abuse, where there are a number of challenging factions, Mark has brought people together. He is firm and has high standards of performance for himself and others. People do not want to disappoint him so they push themselves to go beyond their normal abilities. When his employees do excel, Mark is their greatest champion and they feel his support."

—Lisa-Michele Church, Executive Director
Department of Human Services


A recent quantifiable example of Mark's professional judgment in formulating and implementing policies and best practices occurred at the Utah State Hospital (USH). As a result of budget cuts, Utah has been experiencing a shortage of psychiatric acute care beds. With the traditional system of allocating beds for the state's 11 community mental health centers, if a center's own allocation was filled, they would have to send their patients to the very costly acute care beds while waiting for a USH bed. Under Mark's direction, a much more efficient cooperative plan was implemented which increased the average bed utilization from 90 percent to 96 percent, with 594 additional bed days of inpatient service utilized by centers that had needs above their allocation. Assuming these patients would have been waiting in acute care beds, this would equate to a cost of approximately \$594,000, considering that the conservative bed-day cost estimate is \$1,000 per day. If annualized, this would be 1,425 bed days and a savings to the community mental health centers of \$1,425,000.



Mark Payne, Superintendent

In 1989 Mark was named Assistant Superintendent of Utah State Hospital and in 1993 he took over as Hospital Superintendent. While this position traditionally turns over every two years, Mark stayed for 12 years.

With a strong commitment to his constituents, Mark has been one of the pioneers in Utah of promoting a culture of wellness and recovery in the state's mental health centers. The idea of recovery in the field of mental health is still a relatively new concept. Thus, it was not easy for Mark to introduce an agenda of hope and recovery to the state, but it is now changing the way the mental health community is doing business. In fact, under Mark's direction in 2009, DSAMH adopted a wellness initiative that is already reaping great dividends in the lives of many suffering with mental illness, as service providers have focused more on overall health and well-being with a greater expectation for recovery.

The logo consists of two stylized white figures, one above the other, forming a circular shape. The word "Hope" is written in white above the figures, and the word "Recovery" is written in white below them. The entire logo is set against a green background.

Because Mark is unwilling to accept the status quo, he has been able to effect dramatic changes in a number of counties where it would have been easier to just ignore the problems. A good example was in San Juan County. By communicating with the county commissioners, the pressure Mark brought to bear led to a change in directors at San Juan Counseling. Since that change, San Juan Counseling has doubled the number of individuals served while spending less money.

—Lisa-Michele Church, Executive Director
Department of Human Services



Mark Payne, Director 2005
Division of Substance Abuse & Mental Health

Mark was actively recruited in 2005 to fill his current position in the Department of Human Services as Director of Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health. Under his leadership, perception of the Division has improved dramatically and has gained a measurable level of respect.